

# THREE LECTURES ON AESTHETIC

BY

BERNARD BOSANQUET

D.C.L., LL.D., F.B.A.

FELLOW OF THE BRITISH ACADEMY

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## PREFACE

THESE lectures were delivered at University College, London, in the autumn of 1914, and are printed with hardly any alteration.

I must appear unfortunate in having laid so much stress on "feeling," just when high authorities are expressing a doubt whether the word has any meaning at all (see Croce's <sup>sup.</sup> *Aesthetic*, and Professor J. A. Smith's discussion in *Aristotelian Proceedings for 1913-1914*). I can only say here that the first and main thing which the word suggests to me is the concernment of the whole "body-and-mind" (cp. p. 7, note), as Plato puts it in building up his account of psychical unity on the simple sentence, "The man has a pain in his finger" (*Republic*, 462 D). It is the whole man, the "body-and-mind," who has the pain, and

in it is one, though it is referred to the finger and localised there. When a "body-and-mind" is, as a whole, in any experience, that is the chief feature, I believe, of what we mean by feeling. Think of him as he sings, or loves, or fights. When he is as one, I believe it is always through feeling, whatever distinctions may supervene upon it. That unity, at all events, is the main thing the word conveys to me.

I have not attempted to do justice to the sources of my ideas, for in the limits I had to observe my *jus* would have become *injuria*. Besides, I was trying my level best to talk straight and not learnedly to my audience; and now I want to preserve the same attitude towards my possible readers.

BERNARD BOSANQUET.

OXSHOTT, *January* 1915.

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character to them. Paradox of ugliness, as of evil and error, that if it means anything, it tends to come under head of its opposite; yet seems to show a positive character of its own. Thus cannot be *mere* unexpressiveness, would have no aesthetic meaning; must be unexpressiveness expressed through some kind of contradiction bearing a positive character. "Same thing looked for as in beauty, and opposite found." Thus real ugliness most at home in attempt at beauty which fails—*i.e.* in man's work, especially art. Freedom condition of art and beauty, so abstractions fatal. Goethe on characteristic art.





# I

## THE GENERAL NATURE OF THE AESTHETIC ATTITUDE — CONTEM- PLATION AND CREATION.

ALL that I intend to attempt in these three lectures is (i.) to point out what we mean when we speak of aesthetic experience as contrasted with any other, say, with theory or practice; (ii.) to indicate what I take to be the chief grounds on which we distinguish and connect its different provinces, the beauty of nature, for example, and the whole body of fine art, and then again the several fine arts; and (iii.) finally to trace the divergence and connection of its contrasted qualities, such as receive the names of beauty and ugliness. Obviously, in so short a space, we must not attempt

to be learned. We will describe and analyse our object straight away, to the best of our power. In the main, what we have to say will be quite elementary.

In this first lecture we will try to get a *prima facie* notion of the aesthetic attitude, confining ourselves<sup>d</sup> to its pleasant and satisfactory form. Ugliness and the like raise further problems, which we shall attempt in the third lecture.

I must pause, however, just one moment before plunging into the subject. I must explain what sort of interest in Aesthetic I am presupposing in my audience. It is the interest of a branch of philosophy. It is to consider where in life the aesthetic attitude is to be found, and what is its peculiar form of value, as distinguished from other attitudes and objects in our experience. It is not to prescribe rules for the production of beauty, or for the criticism of artists' work. And again, it is not the interest in aesthetic science, if that means a detailed explanation of the causes of pleasantness and unpleasantness

in sensation and imagination. From such a science we have much to learn, and we may often borrow illustrations from the very elementary cases which are all that it can deal with. But science—the tissue of causal explanations and general laws—and philosophy, —the analysis of forms of reality and their values—are for us different things. And our aesthetic is a branch of philosophy.

A great deal indeed is said about philosophical aesthetic being deductive, arguing downwards from above, not inductively from below, and therefore pursuing an obsolete and metaphysical method. I confess that all this talk about method in philosophy seems to me rather foolish and wearisome. I only know in philosophy one method ; ' and that is to expand *all* the relevant facts, taken together, into ideas which approve themselves to thought as exhaustive and self-consistent.

Now to plunge into our subject. (The simplest aesthetic experience is, to begin with, a pleasant feeling, or a feeling of

something pleasant—when we attend to it, it begins to be the latter.

Is this all? No. The peculiar quality which makes us distinguish it by a certain set of adjectives, of which the word beautiful is the type, seems to be describable by three chief characteristics, closely connected with each other.

i. It is a stable feeling—our pleasure in the something pleasant does not of itself pass into satiety, like the pleasures of eating and drinking. We get tired, *e.g.* at a concert, but that is not that we have had too much of the music; it is that our body and mind strike work. The aesthetic want is not a perishable want, which ceases in proportion as it is gratified.

ii. It is a relevant feeling—I mean it is attached, annexed, to the quality of some object—to all its detail—I would say “relative” if the word were not so ambiguous. One might say it is a special feeling, or a concrete feeling. I may be pleased for all sorts of reasons when I see or hear something, *e.g.* when I hear the dinner-bell,

but that is not an aesthetic experience unless my feeling of pleasure is relevant, attached to the actual sound as I hear it. My feeling in its special quality is evoked by the special quality of the something of which it is the feeling, and in fact is one with it.<sup>1</sup>

iii. It is a common feeling. You can appeal to others to share it; and its value is not diminished by being shared. If it is ever true that "there is no use disputing about tastes," this is certainly quite false of aesthetic pleasures. Nothing is more discussed; and nothing repays discussion better. There is nothing in which education is more necessary, or tells more. To like and dislike rightly is the goal of all culture worth the name.

Now it is implied in these three properties—Permanence, Relevance, Community—that the aesthetic attitude has an object. The feeling, we said, is a feeling of something. It is not, for instance, like

<sup>1</sup> There is a problem about this where meaning or representation come in. We shall return to it.

the pleasantness of the general feeling of health, dependent on a *general* increased vitality. This probably contains aesthetic elements in it, or makes us sensitive to favourable aesthetic conditions; but in the main it is much more general and less relevant. The aesthetic attitude is that in which we have a feeling which is so embodied in an object that it will stand still to be looked at, and, in principle, to be looked at by everybody.

This again brings with it two new points about the aesthetic experience. The mind's attitude in it is "contemplative," and its feeling is "organised," becomes "plastic," "embodied," or "incarnate." We might express the same thing by saying "rationalised" or "idealised"; but these terms are easily misunderstood.

i. "Contemplative" is a word often applied to the aesthetic attitude, and we shall have to criticise it below. *Prima facie*, it indicates a similarity and a contrast with theory and practice. All three are attitudes which a man takes up to-

wards objects; but in both theory and practice he does work upon the objects and alters them; only in the aesthetic attitude he looks at the object and does not try to alter it. How this is reconcilable with the facts of creative art, we shall see below. We might say at once, however, that in creative art the production is as it were a form of perception; it is subordinate to the full imagining, the complete looking or hearing.

ii. Feeling becomes "organised," "plastic," or "incarnate." This character of Aesthetic feeling is all-important. For feeling which has found its incarnation or taken plastic shape cannot remain the passing reaction of a single "body-and-mind."<sup>1</sup> All the three points first mentioned are at once emphasised. Say you are glad or sorry at something. In common life your sorrow is a more or less dull pain, and its object—what it is about—remains a thought associated with it. There is too apt to be no

<sup>1</sup> This expression, written as I write it here, is essential for aesthetic discussion. In it mind is all body and body is all



gain, no advance, no new depth of experience promoted by the connection. But if you have the power to draw out or give imaginative shape to the object and material of your sorrowful experience, then it *must* undergo a transformation. The feeling is submitted to the laws of an object. It must take on permanence, order, harmony, meaning, in short value. It ceases to be a mere self-absorption. One may think of the little poem at the close of the book of Georgian poetry, or, on a larger scale, of *In Memoriam*. The values of which the feeling is capable have now been drawn out and revealed as by cutting and setting a gem. When I say "of which the feeling is capable," I only record the fact that the feeling has been thus developed. For, of course, it is transformed, and the feeling as finally expressed is a new-creation, not the simple pain, without large significance, which was felt at first.

It is just the same in principle if the embodiment is found and not created; it may be a mountain or a flower. You have

not the feeling and its embodiment. The embodiment, as you feel it, is the aesthetic feeling.

This leads to a paradox. We can make the two statements,

(i) In the aesthetic attitude, the object which embodies the feeling is valued solely for what it is in itself.

(ii) In the aesthetic attitude, the object which embodies the feeling is valued solely for its appearance to perception or imagination.

This is because the embodiment of aesthetic feeling can only be an object as we perceive or imagine it. Anything in real existence which we do not perceive or imagine can be of no help to us in realising our feeling. So we may know a great deal about a thing as it really exists—its history, composition, market value, its causes or its effects; all that is as good as not there for the aesthetic attitude. It is all incidental; not present in the aesthetic object. Nothing can help us

but what is there for us to look at, and that is what we perceive or imagine, which can only be the immediate appearance or the semblance. This is the fundamental doctrine of the aesthetic semblance. Man is not civilised, aesthetically, till he has learned to value the semblance above the reality. It is indeed, as we shall see, in one sense the higher reality—the soul and life of things, what they are in themselves.

So far the aesthetic attitude seems to be something like this: preoccupation with a pleasant feeling, embodied in an object which can be contemplated, and so obedient to the laws of an object; and by an object is meant an appearance presented to us through perception or imagination. Nothing which does not appear can count for the aesthetic attitude.

Now, no doubt, this attitude is actually met with in very many different degrees, and the cases on the border-line are very difficult to distinguish. I should say that there is probably some trace of the aesthetic attitude in almost all pleasant feeling.

Take an ascending series of cases. There is the feeling which attends eating when you are very hungry. There is little or nothing in this pleasantness which recalls the characters we emphasised at first, as stable, relevant, and common. You cannot retain the pleasantness as the appetite becomes sated; there is little in it to dwell upon; there is very little to communicate. Tasting a fine wine, when you are not thirsty, has, on the other hand, a good deal in it of the latter kind. In Meredith's *Egoist* the praises of wines ascribed to Dr. Middleton are a case in point. He is able to analyse in terms of permanent and general value the different qualities of pleasantness that characterise the different wines. And this takes us beyond the mere feeling of pleasantness, to an object of imagination, with the character of which its peculiarity is blended. The sense of heat and cold, on the other hand, can give hardly anything like this; it has no structure, no pattern, no connection of elements, to reveal. The sense of smell again gives, *prima facie*,

nothing of the kind ; and if it seemed ever to give material for an aesthetic attitude, it would surely not be the pleasantest scent that would do so, but that which had the most interesting associations, say the smell of peat or of the sea. And this, we may note, would be so far a false value, as the beauty of the sea or of the moors would not really be given in the nature of the scent, but merely attached to it because they had been perceived together in the past ; more or less as the memory of Florence may be connected with my old portmanteau, which gets no aesthetic value from the connection, or very very little.

Now consider the sense of touch ; I mean that by which we can follow lines and surfaces in relief. Many of the audience would be better judges here than I am. The question how far it can give aesthetic pleasure is, I suppose, the question how far it can convey to one the character of a curve or pattern or modelled surface. Without movement, I should presume, it cannot do so at all. With movement, I

suppose that the hand of a blind person, for example, can convey a good deal of aesthetic quality. It seems to me in principle to be as if you had to appreciate a painting by the eye through a narrow slit moving over its surface—I suppose how far you could do it would be a matter of degree. It is difficult to answer in each particular case, but by comparing the cases it is possible to see the nature of the factor in them according to which their aesthetic quality varies. Generally speaking, as we all know, the aesthetic senses are supposed to be those of sight and hearing alone; and no doubt they possess the character we are tracing in a pre-eminent degree.

Here then we are confronted with a new statement of the character which is fundamental in the aesthetic attitude. All that we have so far observed about it is now summed up in a single monosyllable, when we say that the aesthetic attitude is that of feeling embodied in "form."

This "form" is what is present in vary-

ing proportions in all the different grades of the aesthetic attitude which we noted, and what is absent in as far as the aesthetic attitude is absent. The conception of it is all-important both for aesthetic theory and for all philosophy, and we shall have gained something from these lectures if only we can master the right, which is also the effective, point of view for dealing with it, once for all.

We will start from two opposite statements about it.

The Form of an object is not its matter or substance.

The Form of an object just is its matter or substance.

The reason why both statements are true is that we apprehend objects with different degrees of insight or energy ; and so we may only appreciate them as dull masses of stuff, or again we may appreciate them as living units connected and full of character through and through. The least and lowest interconnection an object can have is its outline in space, and this seems

not to have to do with the stuff it is made of. And that is the rudimentary contrast of form and material. And, of course, we never can resolve any object into pure form, pure energy or vitality, or we should be as gods—everything would be to us all spring and life and perfection, with no residue at all. But a contrast, like that of outline and stuff, always haunts us in some degree; though we learn more and more that the two factors are inseparable; e.g. every stuff has its own characteristic outline.

So (i.) Form means outline, shape, general rule, *e.g.* for putting together a sentence, or an argument; or it means the metre in poetry, or the type of poem, sonnet or what not. In all these it is something superficial, general, diagrammatic. We speak of empty form, mere form, formal politeness; it is opposed to the heart and soul of anything, to what is essential, material, and so forth.

But (ii.) when you push home your insight into the order and connection of



parts, not leaving out the way in which this affects the parts themselves; then you find that the form becomes (as a lawyer would say) "very material"; not merely outlines and shapes, but all the sets of gradations and variations and connections that make anything what it is—the life, soul, and movement of the object. And more than this, every form, which you might be inclined to contrast with matter, has behind it a further form in the matter itself; for this determines, as we say, "what you can do with it," with clay or bronze or marble or oil or water-colour, with the string-vibration or the Greek or English tongue; the order and connection of the parts of these stuffs are a form which determines the more artificial shape you can give them, say, in works of art.

Bearing in mind this graded distinction, we can easily see the rights and wrongs of applying such terms as "form" and "formal" to any experience. It all depends on the degree of insight with which the object of experience is appreciated,

and, of course, on the degree of life and structure which a thing actually possesses. In principle, form and substance are one, like soul and body. But we continue to contrast them as we do soul and body, because there is always some failure to bring them quite together, perhaps on their own part, and certainly on ours.

"Degree of life and structure which a thing *actually possesses*." That affects its aesthetic quality less than one might think, for this reason.

The "object" in the aesthetic attitude, we saw, can only be the appearance, not what we call the real thing, what we say we *know* about. Therefore our imagination, or imaginative perception, has a practically infinite choice of objects, because all appearances of things, in any context or connection, are open to it. Now, obviously, the possibilities of discerning "form" vary as much as the apparent objects do. A cloud, *e.g.*, we know to be a mass of cold wet vapour; but taken as we see it with the sun on it, it has quite

different possibilities of revealing aesthetic form, because its wonderful structure is all variously lit up, and so lit up *it* is the object or semblance which matters. And that appearance is all our feeling needs to attach itself to, to find form in. This explains an interesting point. It has been thought that you must come to higher aesthetic quality as you go up the scale of creation, because in that way you come to higher structures. But the fact is, that in a sense these higher structures, *e.g.* of animals, limit your imagination. They do not merge in a new context so readily as do the sea or the clouds, which can take on innumerable variations of appearance. And it is the task of aesthetic perception—perception when it passes into imagination—to choose or create the object, the appearance, whose form or soul or life will satisfy feeling.

Now the principle which it is necessary to grasp is the gradual drawing out or making more of feeling, as a fuller degree of form is appreciated in aesthetic experi-

ence. In addition to the examples which I suggested above, one might select cases within the same progression—a square, a cube, a Doric column, a decorative pattern. As the object reveals more form the feeling which is united to it has, as we say, "more in it"; more to take hold of, to dwell upon, to communicate. Great objects of art contain myriads of elements of form on different levels, knit together in more and more complex systems, till the feeling which they demand is such as to occupy the whole powers of the greatest mind, and more than these if they were to be had. ✓

We have spoken constantly of the fusion of feeling with the object or semblance, and more especially with its form, or connecting and pervading correlations—what we have briefly summarised as its life or soul. The root of this possibility we mentioned at the beginning; it is that every feeling is a feeling of something. It is the sense of the special difference made in the vitality of our body-and-mind by living in a certain experience. How

exactly a feeling can be identified with an object seems to demand some further explanation, and as a mere illustration we may refer to a theory which sometimes sets itself up as almost the whole of aesthetic. It is of this kind. You see a mountain on the horizon,<sup>1</sup> and you say it rises from the plain. This idea of the mountain rising is full of all sorts of associations of life and energy and courage. How is it at once a feeling in you and a characteristic of the mountain? The answer given is that in your act of perception of the lofty object you actually raise your eyes and strain your head and neck upwards, and this fills you with the feeling of an effort of exaltation, and this, with all its associated imaginative meaning, you unconsciously use to qualify the perception of the mountain, which as a perceived object is the cause of the whole train of ideas, and this, it is said, is so throughout. You always, in contemplating objects, especially

<sup>1</sup> Vernon Lee, *The Beautiful*, p. 61 ff. This falls under the doctrine of Empathy or *Einfühlung*, but is far from giving an account of it.

systems of lines and shapes, experience bodily tensions and impulses relative to the forms which you apprehend, the rising and sinking, rushing, colliding, reciprocal checking, etc. of shapes. And these are connected with your own activities in apprehending them; the form, indeed, or law of connection in any object, is, they say, just what depends, for being apprehended, upon activity of body-and-mind on your part. And the feelings and associations of such activity are what you automatically use, with all their associated significances, to compose the feeling which is for you the feeling of the object or the object as an embodied feeling.

This theory gives a very vivid illustration of the way in which a feeling and an object can become identified.

With regard to this theory in this very limited form, I will make four observations.

i. In dealing with the whole range of aesthetic imagination I very greatly distrust all highly specialised explanations. I have seen books which said that all

decorative patterns sprang originally from the lotus flower; others which said that they sprang from the shapes of garden beds; others ascribed many of them to conventionalisation of curves when adapted to basket work; another theory I have seen which referred all expression to the concavity and convexity of curves, the concave being receptive and the convex repellent; and there is some one reviving an old theory of spirals to-day. I believe the store of such suggestions to be unlimited. And I do not doubt that they and thousands like them indicate sources of stimuli by which now and again one or another person's imagination has been set in motion.

ii. I quote a portion of an explanation of this kind. "Here<sup>1</sup> is a jar, equally common in antiquity and in modern peasant ware. Looking at this jar one has a specific sense of a whole. To begin with, the feet press the ground while the eyes fix

<sup>1</sup> Vernon Lee, cited in Mitchell's *Structure and Growth of the Mind*, p. 504.

the base of the jar. Then one accompanies the lift up, so to speak, of the body of the jar by a lift up of one's own body. . . . Meantime the jar's equal sides bring both lungs into equal play ; the curve outwards of the jar's two sides is simultaneously followed by an inspiration as the eyes move up to the jar's highest point." This very nearly means, "that we have to make a jar of ourselves in order to be absorbed in the jar before us." In the first place, this gives an unreal prominence to lines and shapes. It is a great mistake to confuse aesthetic form with spatial shape, though shape, as we saw, is very likely the first occasion of our distinguishing form. And lines and shapes are no more form-giving than colour and tones. Colour-contrast and gradation, as also the harmonic relations of tones, belong to aesthetic form just as much as shape in space or rhythm in time. In the second place, all these bodily tensions and movements would really be inconsistent with each other. Our practised imagination or perception does not require



all these detailed auxiliaries, and would in fact be impeded by them.

How sharp the silver spearheads charge  
Where Alp meets heaven in snow.

One cannot believe that these lines appeal to us through bodily movements.

iii. A good example is the case of movements of the eye. It has been supposed<sup>1</sup> that when we take pleasure in a graceful curve, our eye is executing this same curve, "that we feel pleasure in this movement, or in the ease of it, and turn this pleasure into a quality of the object whose outlines we follow." Well, it simply is not so. The eye in following a curve moves with jerks and in straight lines. "The muscles of the eye are mere scene-shifters."<sup>2</sup> The curve is an object of perception, and the character with which our imagination invests it comes, no doubt, from something in our experience. But there is no possible reason, with the whole world of experience to draw upon, why it should come from the movement of our eyes, and,

<sup>1</sup> Mitchell, *op cit.* p. 501.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

as we have seen, it could not possibly do so. Of course it remains true that we must be able to *live* or *live in* the detail of the object if our pleasant feeling is to become a property of it, so that it (the object) is the body of our pleasure. But in order to do this we have the whole world of imagination, about which we must speak directly.

iv. But before going on to speak of Imagination there is one point of principle to notice. Such a theory as we have just referred to carries very different weight if we believe it to be a vehicle of illusion, and if we believe it to be an interpretation of truth. You might say, indeed, "Why surely it is much *more* important if it conveys the truth than if it promotes illusion." But that is not so in every respect. If what it conveys is truth—if there really is in Nature and the world a pervading life and divinity—then this special theory is only one among innumerable illustrations of the ways in which we can come to the realisation of this truth; to penetration

of the open secret of the world as the manifestation of a central life and spirit. But if what it conveys is in principle an illusion, then our imagination has nothing to support it but just this machinery of transferring our own activities to an object, with which they really have nothing to do. And in this case the special theory which explains how the transference is possible seems necessary to justify our aesthetic attitude, though really in explaining it, it explains it away. It is the difference between a fancy and a revelation.

We have often referred to imagination. There is a tendency to think of imagination as a sort of separate faculty, creative of images; a tendency which puts a premium on the arbitrary and fantastic in beauty, rather than the logical and the penetrative. But this, I take it, is simply a blunder. The imagination is precisely the mind at work, pursuing and exploring the possibilities suggested by the connection of its experience. It may operate, of course, in the service of logical enquiry,

and of exact science itself—the scientific use of the imagination is a well-known topic. The only difference is that when imagination is free, when the mind is operating, for instance, not in the service of theoretical truth, but in that of aesthetic feeling, then it altogether ceases to be bound by agreement with what we call reality as a whole. It cannot help starting from what we call experience, from what we have felt and seen, because there is nothing else to start from ; but its guiding purpose is the satisfaction of feeling, and not the construction of a system in which every fact shall have its logically appropriate place. The only test is, whether it satisfies the feeling which inspires it. And its method need not be logical, though it often is so, and I incline to think is so in the best imaginative work. By saying it need not be logical, I mean that in following out a suggestion it need not adhere to the main thread of connection. It may start afresh on any incidental feature that presents itself. Practically,

object, being able in that way to live in it as an embodiment of our feeling.

Now I am uneasy about this word "contemplate." No doubt it makes a very good distinction against the practical and the theoretical frames of mind; which in contrast with it are very like each other. For, I think, we must distinguish the theoretical, at least in modern usage, from the "theoretic." "Theoretic" is pretty much "contemplative," while "theoretical" indicates a very busy activity aimed at putting together hypotheses and testing them by facts. It is in this sense that it is so sharply opposed to "theoretic" or contemplative.

This word contemplative seems to fit the attitude of three kinds of people—the lover of Nature, the looker-on at the spectacle of art, and the critic. But it does not seem to me to fit, *prima facie*, the attitude of the person who is surely most to be considered in aesthetic, that is, the artist. And I should not be easily persuaded that an attitude in the spectator

and the nature-lover, which is wholly alien to that of the creative artist, can be the true aesthetic attitude. The arts which appeal to the eye exercise too much glamour over us. Think of singing, acting, dancing; the feeling of following music or reading poetry with true poetic appreciation.

Then go back to the simple case, say, of a mountain, or of the sea in a storm, when you call it splendid. Surely we enter into these objects in some way; we are absorbed; they carry us away. I find some difficulty here in recent aesthetic books; they want you to maintain a contemplative attitude and yet to be absorbed in the object, which involves, I should say, being carried away by it, *e.g.* in music.

You find the same problem if you look for the aesthetic attitude in the "judgment of taste." It implies a tradition which is not altogether wholesome. Taste, a metaphor drawn, we note, from an *unaesthetic* sense, suggests a rather superficial judgment

of how things go together; like William James's malicious example of aesthetic judgment, "lemon juice goes well with oysters." Starting from the judgment of taste goes along with the idea that the aesthetic attitude is mainly critical, external. Some great men have rebelled altogether against this suggestion, and have said that good taste pretty generally fails to appreciate genius.

It is pretty much the same problem when you ask how the spectator's enjoyment is related to the creative artist's. Take a drama, for instance. The spectator must be absorbed and move along with it. His is really a lower degree of the creative artist's feeling. Then what about the critic? Has he the same attitude, and if not, which is the right one?

The word that will help us here and show us how to appreciate all these points of view is perhaps that we discussed above, "Imagination." From the simplest perception of a square or a cube, or of a rock or stream, upwards to the greatest achieve-

ments of music or the drama, it is plain, I think, that the aesthetic attitude must be imaginative. That is to say, it must be the attitude of a mind which freely tracks and pursues the detail of experience for the sake of a particular kind of satisfaction—not the satisfaction of complete and self-consistent theory, but the automatic satisfaction, so to speak, of a complete embodiment of feeling. The important point seems to me to be that “contemplation” should not mean “inertness,” but should include from the beginning a creative element. I have avoided, indeed, throughout this lecture, the word which I myself believe to be the keyword to a sound aesthetic, because it is not altogether a safe word to employ until we have made ourselves perfectly certain of the true relation between feeling and its embodiment. But to say that the aesthetic attitude is an attitude of expression, contains I believe if rightly understood the whole truth of the matter. Only, if we are going to use this language, we must



cut off one element of the commonplace meaning of expression. We must not suppose that we first have a disembodied feeling, and then set out to find an embodiment adequate to it. In a word, imaginative expression creates the feeling in creating its embodiment, and the feeling so created not merely cannot be otherwise expressed, but cannot otherwise exist, than in and through the embodiment which imagination has found for it.

When we say then, that the aesthetic attitude is contemplative, we do not mean much more than that in it there is always an appearance before us, and that it is in the character and detail of this appearance that we find the gratification of an embodied feeling. We do not mean to deny that throughout, from beginning to end, from James's example onwards and upwards, imagination is active and creative, in other words, that the mind is freely reconstructing and remodelling all that perception presents to it in the direction which promises the maximum of "form."

The manual practice of art is not, I take it, an obstacle to this creative work of imagination, but on the contrary, as we shall see, is its essential medium and intensification. And the spectator's attitude I take to be merely a faint analogue of the creative rapture of the artist.

The relation of the purely critical attitude to that of the spectator who enjoys and the artist who creates, does not seem to me altogether an easy problem. I think we shall be on the right lines if we demand in principle that the substratum of the critical attitude shall be the full imaginative experience, certainly of the spectator who enjoys, and as far as possible of the artist who creates. The true critic, indeed, is he, and he only, who can teach us rightly to enjoy. And we must bear in mind that the imagination itself is necessarily very sensitive to checks and failures in its efforts after satisfactory form—and this genuine sensitiveness, I should suppose, must be the basis of the true critical estimate.

But I should suppose that for the complete realisation of the critical attitude something further is required. I take it that the critic must go back in memory and reflection upon his full imaginative experience, and draw out and emphasise the points at which failure or success in expression have forced themselves on his feelings with a completeness of analysis which would hardly be compatible with the full enjoyment of the imaginative experience itself. And we have to remember that the critic's principal duty after all is not to point out blemishes, but rather to teach us to enjoy. And therefore even for him the greatest possible fulness of the imaginative experience is the main and indispensable condition.

We may conclude then that the aesthetic attitude so far as enjoyable may fairly be described in some such words as these: The pleasant awareness of a feeling embodied in an appearance presented to imagination or imaginative perception; or,

more shortly, "Feeling expressed for expression's sake."

In the following lecture we shall speak of the relation of nature and art, and of the distinction of the latter into kinds.

## II

### THE AESTHETIC ATTITUDE IN ITS EMBODIMENTS—"NATURE" AND THE ARTS.

THE natural order in which to approach the problems of any enquiry is the order of their difficulty. When you have solved the simplest, its solution affords the basis for an approach to the next simplest, and so on.

Therefore we are not at all concerned with the historical order of things. What we want to do to-day is to form some idea of the rank taken by the different achievements of the aesthetic spirit, arranged in accordance with the difficulties which are overcome in each of them, or in other words, with the degree of aesthetic embodiment which they respectively achieve.

The simplest cases of aesthetic utterance, the easiest to apprehend and explain, are some which I should like to call, in a usage which I am aware is very lax, *a priori* embodiments of the aesthetic spirit. We spoke in the last lecture of the square and the cube, which carry their steadiness, and sturdiness, and equality in all directions, actually written on their faces. That's all square, we say. We do not pledge ourselves to any one special meaning expressed in words. An aesthetic embodiment can be embodied in nothing but itself. But the constant application of expressions like those cited here and above suffice to show that these simple patterns are obvious or *a priori* embodiments of simple feelings. Along with them we may place simple rhythms, simple melodies, the pulsations of the dance, and the like. These are in fact simple patterns; and all of them have obvious analogies with each other. Hogarth described his enjoyment of the "stick and ribbon ornament" (the guilloche) as like that of watching a

country dance. This reminds us of the theory of the rising mountain we referred to in the last lecture.

In all these objects of aesthetic feeling, whose pleasurableness I have ventured to call *a priori*, we have what might be called the simplest formal character. The three characteristics of aesthetic objects which we began by laying down in the last lecture, are here plain and obvious, stability, relevance, community, rooted in the character of the mere abstract pattern which we perceive or in which we are absorbed (as in the rhythm of the dance). Fast or slow, simple or intricate, self-completing or interrupted—all these characters seem to adhere immediately to the lines and movements, colours and sounds which fall into the simple arrangements. I am not asserting that this is the earliest origin of, say, the dance. We are not speaking historically; and it is quite possible that a representative meaning in, *e.g.*, the dance, as the war dance, the bear dance, the Dionysus dance, may be older

than the recognition of the simple aesthetic value of sound and rhythm. But that does not concern us to-day. We are concerned with aesthetic value, and with that alone.

The point, for aesthetic theory, is that so far, in such *a priori* expression, we have no element of representation or almost none. "Almost none," because some one might urge that a cube drawn on paper can only have its peculiar character by being taken to represent an actual solid cube of wood or stone. And that would be so with the rising mountain, if we think of it as a mountain. But that is really not necessary at this primary level. The square drawn on paper is enough, and so are the systems of lines and shapes (such as the pattern from the ceiling at Orchomenus) and the simple living in the pulsations of the dance.

We get to a point beyond this in difficulty and complexity—whatever the historical relations may be—when we get two factors to deal with instead of one. You may have a drawing on paper which



is a square pattern; and you may have one—the early draughtsmen were very fond of them—which not only is a pattern on paper or on gold, but which represents, say, a bull hunt.

This is a new factor, and it introduces not only quite a different motive in art, but the entire problem of what passes as the beauty of nature. Because obviously a drawing of a bull hunt recalls to us things rather than patterns. For a pattern, as a rule, you want the help of a draughtsman; but for things you can see all round you every day, you seem to want no help at all. Only they do not *prima facie* show you simple abstract patterns; and so, how do you bring them to act as an aesthetic embodiment of feeling?

And the same difficulty applies to a whole great branch of the activity of fine art. It may draw for you a bull hunt, or sculpture Phoebus Apollo, or sing to you the story of Troy. All this is on a quite different footing from what we called the *a priori* form of aesthetic expression.

There is a tendency to bring in mere facts ; to test the representation by your knowledge and to demand that it should by that test be adequate, and even to say that its aesthetic value lies in bringing these independent facts and beings completely and faithfully before you. In short, there is a vicious tendency to subordinate expression to knowledge, which means losing hold of the principle of aesthetic semblance. This is, as we saw, that for aesthetic value we need, and can use, nothing in the way of embodiment which is not an appearance moulded freely by the mind as a vehicle of aesthetic form, the soul of things, in which we live them.

The aesthetic problem at this point springs from an embarrassment of wealth. In place of a comparatively small range of simple and obvious expression, we have thrown upon our hands the whole abundance of the sensible and imaginable world as a claimant for aesthetic value. We seem forced in some way and degree to admit knowledge and fact as instruments

of expression ; to use our experience of the character and qualities which things have really and in actuality, to help our imagination in its exploration of the forms which respond satisfactorily to feeling.

It is plain that we are not to lose hold of what we have got ; the simple pattern or rhythm which we ventured to call expressive *a priori*. Every work of art and every thing of beauty presents such a pattern, so to speak, on its surface. But we must contrive to understand how the same principle can extend into the sphere of the representation of things ; of which things, *prima facie*, we know only what we have learned from experience, and can say, it would seem, little that is necessary or inevitable as to the connection of appearances with any character or quality which could help to embody feeling. For instance, a man's laughing might be the expression of pain or anger, if we had not learned by experience that it is otherwise. Green trees might be the withering ones, and brown trees the flourishing ones ;

without special experience of human bodies you could not know how or when their appearance indicates vitality or character; without experience of animals you could not know that the drawing of the bull hunt indicates activity, courage, ferocity. You cannot read these things off from the patterns or the colour-combinations; you have ultimately to arrive at them from the knowledge of facts. When you come to human portraiture, the reading of the human countenance, geometrical properties of lines and shapes help you not at all, or hardly at all. You have to rely upon special lessons, learned in the school of life.

This is, I think, the difficulty as it presents itself. I have purposely overstated it a little.

The first thing that strikes us is that it is extraordinarily parallel to the difficulty as to how far necessary knowledge can be had in the sphere of natural science. You cannot see the chemical properties of substances in them, as you can see the properties of circles or triangles; you

cannot ultimately establish even the law of gravitation except by finding that it seems to explain all facts of the kind it applies to. But yet there is such a thing<sup>a</sup> as natural science, and it has its degrees of necessity; and some things are pretty fully and generally established and shed great clearness wherever they apply, and some again are mere observations for which no reason or general probability whatever can be adduced.

Well, this is the sort of way, I suppose, in which we must conceive the problem of making representation instrumental to expression. I see the statue of the Discobolos, and I see that it represents a man in act to hurl a disc. Now to live myself into this representation, I must consider what a man is, and I must have some knowledge how his body works and balances, and so on. I cannot read off anything at all from the statue merely as a pattern in marble, as I could if it were a marble cube or sphere. This is the difficulty of representation as I stated it.

But it was, as the comparison of natural science shows, a little overstated. Because, it is not a mere dead fact of my experience that a man's body in a certain position indicates a certain sort or phase of vitality. It is true that I must know something about a man's body before I can live myself into it at all; but when I can do so, the attitude of the disc-thrower's body is after all necessary in relation to my feeling, and not a bare disconnected fact. It has, to use my former phrase, *something of a priori* expressiveness. When you know its structure, its position does become inevitable. It is hopeless, indeed, to reduce the expressiveness of representation, or of the contemplation of nature which raises the same problem, to the *a priori* expressiveness of a pattern like a square. True, the appearance which is the object will, in principle, fail to be a satisfactory embodiment of feeling, unless it is at least satisfactory as a mere pattern, or *a priori* expression; but also and additionally, in harmony with this satisfactoriness, it must

be satisfactorily expressive through the concrete character of that which it represents. You must interpret the Discobolos through your experience of human bodies; and I suppose that your sense of the life in the abstract pattern is itself actually amplified and intensified by this deeper experience. As the necessity of science penetrates into and extends over the realm of fact, so, I imagine, the expressiveness of the abstract pattern penetrates, by experience used in the service of the imagination, into the realm of nature and man, and extends itself over and appropriates ground that is primarily representative and gains at the same time a deeper significance from it. The Greek treatment of drapery, which is both delightful in itself as a pattern, and deeply expressive, *e.g.* of movement, is a good example. It should be noted that we exclude mere association from the expressive connection which we demand. The expressiveness must be in some degree inherent in the form, or what I have

called *a priori*. Mere association brings us down at once to the level of knowledge of fact, as when my old portmanteau reminds me of Florence.

And further, in the power which very successful representation undoubtedly exercises over our minds, there is active, I have no doubt, a principle which is really of high aesthetic value, although in enhancing the importance of skilful copying it is misconstrued and misapplied.

I will repeat myself so far as to give an example which I gave many years ago, and in which I admit that I take great enjoyment. It is—I am shamelessly quoting from myself—perhaps the earliest aesthetic judgment which Western literature contains. It is in the Homeric description of the metal-working deity's craftsmanship in the shield of Achilles. He has made upon it the representation of a deep fallow field with the ploughmen driving their furrows on it; and the poet observes, "And behind the plough the earth went black, and looked like ploughed ground,



though it was made of gold ; that was a very miracle of his craft."

Now what was the miracle here, that made Homer cry out at it with delight ? It was not, surely, that when you have one bit of ploughed land you can make another like it. That goes on all day when a man ploughs a field. Or what made Dante say of the sculptures on the marble of Purgatory, that one who saw the reality would see no better than he did, and that the representation of some smoke set his eyes and nose at variance as to whether it was real ?

Surely the miracle lies in what Homer accents when he says, "Though it was made of gold." It lies here ; that without the heavy matter and whole natural process of the reality, man's mind possesses a magic by which it can extract the soul of the actual thing or event, and confer it on any medium which is convenient to him, the wall of a cave, or a plate of gold, or a scrap of paper. And when these great poets insist on the likeness of the imitation,

I take it that the real underlying interest is in the conquest of the difference of the medium. So that really, in the naive praise of successful imitation, we have, if we read it rightly, the germ of the fundamental doctrine of aesthetic semblance. That is to say, what matters is not the thing, but the appearance which you can carry off, and deal with apart from it, and recreate. And the real sting of even the crudest glorification of copying is this wonder that you can carry off with you a thing's soul, and leave its body behind. It is quite natural to misconceive this miracle as if the merit lay in making the soul as near as possible a replica of the body. But if you treat the soul as the body at its very best, that is not a bad analogy for the problem of representation in dealing with the aesthetic semblance. See how pregnant this praise of copying is. Dante, in the same passage, says that the carvings put to shame "not only Polycleitus, but Nature herself." It is the spirit of Whistler's "Nature's creeping up."

You can copy a thing so splendidly that your copy will be more beautiful than the thing.

Thus we are prepared to understand the place and value of representation, which has always been something of a theoretical difficulty in aesthetic. It introduces *prima facie* an enormously larger and deeper world than the world of non-representative pattern-designing, to be the instrument of the embodiment of feeling. But the difficulty is that *qua* a mere world of fact, it has no capacity for *a priori* expression; and the use of it for expressive purposes, the imaginative use of fact, is therefore subject to innumerable dangers, arising from unaesthetic interests, which attach themselves to actual reality and therefore also to its imitative reproduction. Why multiply, for example, scenes and stories of wickedness? Is there not enough of it in the world already? If you are simply copying what you find, revealing in it no new depth or passion, the question is unanswerable.

I promised not to be historical ; but I may mention it here as an extraordinary piece of insight on Aristotle's part, in which, essentially, he followed and summarised Plato, when he said that music was of all the arts the *most* imitative, meaning expressive, precisely on the ground that of all the arts it was the *least* representative. Its expression, that is to say, approached most nearly to what we have ventured to call *a priori* expressiveness. Its rhythms and combinations went directly to the heart of emotion. They are, Aristotle says, *direct* resemblances of emotions, that is, without making the circuit of reference to anything which had a name and existence in the external world. I suppose this is in general the doctrine of musical expression accepted to-day.

In speaking of the place of representation in aesthetic experience, we have said all that is important on the aesthetic position of the love of natural beauty. For nature in its utmost range, including artificial things, and man as an external

object, is just the region of all the things which can be objects of representative reproduction. The only thing that need be added is that by nature we mean, for aesthetic purposes, the fulness of the soul or semblance of external things, that which imaginative perception freely apprehends, and remodels in the interest of feeling. There is no reason to cut down our meaning to the attenuated constructions of physical science. They are not nature as it appears, and nature as it appears is what we love and admire. It is the living external world, as we *re*live it in our fullest imaginative experience.

It is well known that this, in its fulness, is a point of view which takes time to develop. "The charm of Nature," I believe, in the modern sense, is first mentioned by an Alexandrine poet of about the third century A.D. "In the house you have rest; out-of-doors the charm of nature."<sup>1</sup>

And as we saw, though this imaginative

<sup>1</sup> Mackail, *Select Epigrams*, p. 278.

experience is not within actual reality, and is not to be interpreted as theoretical truth, yet it may make a difference to our general theory of things, and our theory may make a difference to it. And so, for example, representation of nature and imitation and idealisation are very different things according as we hold that nature has in it a life and divinity which it is attempting to reveal,—so that idealisation is the positive effort to bring to apprehension the deeper beauty we feel to be there,—or as we hold that nature is at bottom a dead mechanical system, ~~and~~ idealisation therefore lies in some way of treating it which weakens or generalises its effect and makes it less and not more of what its fullest character would be. No doubt, theory seeking for truth does not accept imaginative expressions as logical conclusions, but it is bound to take account of the fact that imagination finds in experience the instrument of that immense embodiment of feeling which it constructs. Aesthetic imagination and logical theory are co-

ordinate powers. Neither can do the work of the other. But both reveal something to us in their own way.

We have seen that what we may call pure or *a priori* expression is not merely the simplest and primary character of aesthetic embodiments, but recurs also at what is almost the climax of aesthetic achievement, that is, in the art of music. This leads us to observe how capriciously, as it would seem, this principle of representation asserts itself in the hierarchy of the arts. In architecture it is present hardly at all; in sculpture and painting it is predominant; in music, it has hardly any place as of right, or a very subordinate one; in poetry, it reasserts itself with almost predominant power. There seems to be in some degree a struggle between the two sides of the aesthetic attitude, the side of direct expression through rhythm and sensuous combinations, and the side which, though its contribution to expression is indirect, yet brings with it in the end the whole resources of the imaginable universe.

As we saw, if we consider the problem accurately, it is impossible to dispense with either factor, and they have indeed no aesthetic existence apart. Yet the idea for example that in music we have the pure type of expressiveness, that towards which every art is bound to aspire, does appear to indicate an inherent impulse of the art-spirit towards a mode of utterance which is not loaded with the weight of representation.<sup>1</sup> We have only to say, that we have attempted to display the necessary root of this apparent conflict, and to explain how the representative factor, while having no independent justification, is nevertheless essential, in its place, to the full development of the aesthetic attitude.

After all, we can relive the character and conflicts of man, as we express them for instance in the drama, with a necessity which not only covers a wider and deeper world, but which also is more unmistakable

<sup>1</sup> Cp. what Pater said of colour, that it is "a spirit upon things, by which they become expressive to the spirit."



and precise in its sequences, than the simple language of rhythm or the decorative pattern. For the mind of man is open to us as the extension of our own, and has its own necessity, which weaves its great patterns on the face of the whole world. And in these patterns—the patterns of life itself—the fullest feeling finds embodiment.

If we now proceed to say something of what is involved in the classification of the arts, it is not for the sake of advocating any particular arrangement. Mere classification is always an idle study, but the general condition and essence of the difference between kindred things usually throws a searching light on their inmost nature.

Why, then, are there different arts? The simple answer to this question takes us, I believe, to the precise root and source of the whole principle of aesthetic expressiveness, which we have already analysed in more general terms.

We should begin, I am convinced, from the very simplest facts. Why do artists make different patterns, or treat the same

pattern differently, in wood-carving, say, and clay-modelling, and wrought-iron work? If you can answer this question thoroughly, then, I am convinced, you have the secret of the classification of the arts and of the passage of feeling into its aesthetic embodiment; that is, in a word, the secret of beauty.

Why, then, in general does a worker in clay make different decorative patterns from a worker in wrought-iron? I wish I could go into this question with illustrations and details, but I will admit at once that I am not really competent to do so, though I have taken very great interest in the problem. But in general there can surely be no doubt of the answer. You cannot make the same things in clay as you can in wrought-iron, except by a *tour de force*. The feeling of the work is, I suppose, altogether different. The metal challenges you, coaxes you, as William Morris said of the molten glass, to do a particular kind of thing with it, where its tenacity and ductility make themselves

felt. The clay, again, is delightful, I take it, to handle, to those who have a talent for it; but it is delightful of course in quite different manipulations from those of the wrought-iron. I suppose its facility of surface, how it lends itself to modelling or to throwing on the wheel, must be its great charm. Now the decorative patterns which are carried out in one or the other may, of course, be suggested *ab extra* by a draughtsman, and have all sorts of properties and interests in themselves as mere lines on paper. But when you come to carry them out in the medium, then, if they are appropriate, or if you succeed in adapting them, they become each a special phase of the embodiment of your whole delight and interest of "body-and-mind" in handling the clay or metal or wood or molten glass. It is alive in your hands, and its life grows or rather magically springs into shapes which it, and you/in it, seem to desire and feel inevitable. The feeling for the medium, the sense of what can rightly be done in it only or better than

in anything else, and the charm and fascination of doing it so—these, I take it, are the real clue to the fundamental question of aesthetics, which is “how feeling and its body are created adequate to one another.” It is parallel to the question in general philosophy, “Why the soul has a body.” It is the same sort of thing as the theory of the rising mountain, but it is much less open to caprice, being absolute fact all through, and it explains not merely the interpretation of lines and shapes, but the whole range and working of the aesthetic imagination in the province of fine art, which is its special province.

To this doctrine belongs the very fruitful modern topic of the relation of beautiful handicraft with the workman’s life, as the outcome and expression of his body-and-mind, and amid all the disparagement which the most recent views of art are apt to throw upon Ruskin, we must remember that it was first and foremost to his inspired advocacy that this point of view owes its recognition to-day, and William Morris,

for instance, recognised him, in this respect at least, as his master.

The differences of the great arts then are simply such differences as those between clay-modelling, wood-carving, and wrought-iron work, developed on an enormous scale, and with their inevitable consequences for whole provinces of aesthetic imagination.

For this is a fact of the highest importance. Every craftsman, we saw, feels the peculiar delight and enjoys the peculiar capacity of his own medium. This delight and sense of capacity are of course not confined to the moments when he is actually manipulating his work. His fascinated imagination lives in the powers of his medium; he thinks and feels in terms of it; it is the peculiar body of which *his* aesthetic imagination and no other is the peculiar soul.

Thus there grow up the distinct traditions, the whole distinctive worlds of imaginative thought and feeling, in which the great imaginative arts have their life and being.

And this leads to the important question, what is meant by the ideal in art. The essential point is, as we saw when speaking of the idealisation of nature, that the ideal should not be a tendency which is negatively related to the fullest aesthetic expression. The ideal has often indicated a generalisation and abstraction, ultimately depending on the notion that to get at the root and law of things is to get at a generalised common element in which they resemble one another. But we saw that if it means anything in application to nature, it means the heightened expression of character and individuality which come of a faith in the life and divinity with which the external world is instinct and inspired.

This same conception of the ideal is the lesson of our doctrine of art. The ideal of every art must be revealed, I take it, in terms of the art itself; and it must be what underlies the whole series of efforts which the artist's imagination has made and is making, to create, in his own medium, an embodied feeling in which he

can rest satisfied. It is the world as he has access to it through his art. It may seem to him more than any of his works ; but it only has existence in them and in the effort which they imply when taken all together. The danger is to try and make a picture of this effort, apart from any of its achievements, which is really nothing. Then you get the enfeebled ideal, which means the omission of all character and individuality.

Now let us take a particular case. If our view of the distinction and connection of the arts is right, and it is simply a question of the medium adopted by each, and the capacities of that medium as proved by experience, what is to be said of the distinctive character of *poetry* ? It seems in a sense to have almost no material element, to work directly with significant ideas in which the objects of the imagination are conveyed. Language is so transparent, that it disappears, so to speak, into its own meaning, and we are left with no characteristic medium at all.

I do not think there can be any doubt about the true attitude here. Poetry, like the other arts, has a physical or at least a sensuous medium, and this medium is sound. It is, however, significant sound, uniting inseparably in itself the factors of formal expression through an immediate pattern, and of representation through the meanings of language, exactly as sculpture and painting deal at once and in the same vision both with formal patterns and with significant shapes. That language is a physical fact with its own properties and qualities is easily seen by comparing different tongues, and noting the form which different patterns, such as sapphic or hexameter verse, necessarily receive in different languages, such as Greek and Latin. To make poetry in different languages, *e.g.* in French and German, is as different a task as to make decorative work in clay and iron. The sound metre and meaning are the same inseparable product in a poem as much as the colour, form, and embodied feeling in a



picture. And it is only an illusion to suppose that because you have significant sentences in poetry, therefore you are dealing with meanings which remain the same outside the poem, any more than a tree or a person whom you think you recognise in a picture, is, as you know them at home so to speak, *the* tree or *the* person *of* the picture. Poetry no more keeps its meaning when turned into corresponding prose, than a picture or a sonata keeps its meaning in the little analyses they print in the catalogues or programmes.

Shelley, according to Professor Bradley, had a feeling of the kind referred to. Poetry seemed to him to deal with a perfectly apt and transparent medium, with no qualities of its own, and therefore approaching to being no medium at all, but created out of nothing by the imagination for the use of the imagination. While the media employed by the other arts, being gross and physical and having independent qualities of their own, seemed to him rather obstacles in the way of

expression than apt instruments of it. The answer to such a view is what we have just given.

\* It is the qualities of the media which give them the capacity to serve as embodiments of feeling; and sonorous language, the medium of poetry, has its peculiarities and definite capacities precisely like the others.

Here, I cannot but think, we are obliged to part company, with some regret, from Benedetto Croce. He is possessed, as so often is the case with him, by a fundamental truth, so intensely that he seems incapable of apprehending what more is absolutely necessary to its realisation. Beauty, he sees, is for the mind and in the mind. A physical thing, supposed unperceived and unfelt, cannot be said in the full sense to possess beauty. But he forgets throughout, I must think, that though feeling is necessary to its embodiment, yet also the embodiment is necessary to feeling. To say that because beauty implies a mind, therefore it is an internal state, and

its physical embodiment is something secondary and incidental, and merely brought into being for the sake of permanence and communication—this seems to me a profound error of principle, a false idealism. It meets us, however, throughout 'Croce's system, according to which "intuition"—the inward vision of the artist—is the only true expression. External media, he holds, are, strictly speaking, superfluous, so that there is no meaning in distinguishing between one mode of expression and another (as between paint and musical sound and language). Therefore there can be no classification of the arts, and no fruitful discussion of what can better be done by one art than by another. And aesthetic—the philosophy of expression—is set down as all one with linguistic—the philosophy of speech. For there is no meaning in distinguishing between language in the sense of speech, and other modes of expression. Of course, if he had said that speech is not the only form of language, but that every art speaks to

us in a language of its own, that would have had much to be said for it. But I do not gather that that is his intention.

\* His notion is not a new one among theorists. It really is deeply rooted in a philosophical blunder. No doubt it seems obvious, when once pointed out, that things are not all there, not complete in all qualities, except when they are appreciated in a mind. And then, having rightly observed that this is so, we are apt to go on and say that you have them complete, and have all you want of them, if you have them before your mind and have not the things in bodily presence at all. But the blunder is, to think that you can have them completely before your mind without having their bodily presence at all. And because of this blunder, it seems fine and "ideal" to say that the artist operates in the bodiless medium of pure thought or fancy, and that the things of the bodily world are merely physical causes of sensation, which do not themselves enter into the effects he uses.

It is rather a natural thing to say about poetry, because we discount the physical side of language. We glance at its words and do not sound them. And Shelley, as we saw, says something very like that.

But at the very beginning of all this notion, as we said, there is a blunder. Things, it is true, are not complete without minds, but minds, again, are not complete without things ; not any more, we might say, than minds are complete without bodies. Our resources in the way of sensation, and our experiences in the way of satisfactory and unsatisfactory feeling, are all of them won out of our intercourse with things, and are thought and imagined by us as qualities and properties of the things. Especially we see this in music. Here we have an art entirely made up of a material—musical tone—which one may say does not exist at all in the natural world, and is altogether originated by our inventive and imaginative manipulation of physical things, pressing on in the line of creative discovery which something very

like accident must at first have opened up to us.<sup>1</sup> Apart from this imaginative operation upon physical things, our fancy in the realm of music could have done as good as nothing.

And in principle it is the same with all the arts. All the material and the physical process which the artist uses—take our English language as used in poetry for an example—has been elaborated and refined, and, so to speak, consecrated by ages of adaptation and application in which it has been fused and blended with feeling—and it carries the life-blood of all this endeavour in its veins; and that is how, as we have said over and over again, feelings get their embodiment, and embodiments get their feeling. If you try to cut the thought and fancy loose from the body of the stuff in which it moulds its pictures and poetic ideas and musical constructions, you impoverish your fancy, and arrest its growth, and reduce it to a bloodless shade. When I pronounce even

<sup>1</sup> This applies even to the development of song, so far as that involves a musical system.

a phrase so commonplace in itself as "Rule, Britannia!" the actual vibrations of the sound, the bodily experience I am aware of in saying it, is alive with the history of England which passed into the words in the usage and formation of the language. Up to a certain point, language is poetry ready-made for us.

And I suppose that a great painter, in his actual handling of his brush, has present with him a sense of meaning and fitness which is one with the joy of execution, both of which the experience of a lifetime has engrained in the co-operation of his hand and eye. I take it, there is a pleasure in the brush stroke, which *is also* a sense of success in the use of the medium, and of meaning in hitting the exact effect which he wants to get. We common people have something analogous to all this, when we enjoy the too-rare sensation of having found the right word. In such "finding" there is a creative element. A word is, quite strictly speaking, not used twice in the same sense.

Croce says, indeed, that the artist has every stroke of the brush in his mind as complete before he executes it as after. The suggestion is that using the brush adds nothing to his inward or mental work of art. I think that this is false idealism. The bodily thing adds immensely to the mere idea and fancy, in wealth of qualities and connections. If we try to cut out the bodily side of our world, we shall find that we have reduced the mental side to a mere nothing.

And so, when we said that you can carry away the soul of a thing and leave its body behind, we always added that you must in doing so confer its soul upon a new and spiritualised body. Your imagination must be an imagination of something, and if you refuse to give that something a definite structure, you pass from the aesthetic semblance to the region of abstract thought. I have spoken of sound as physical; if this is a difficulty it is enough to call it sensuous, and sensuous in immediate connection with other physical



properties and experiences. This applies both to music and to language.

All this later argument of ours, starting from the importance of medium and technique, has aimed at exhibiting in detail the double process of creation and contemplation which is implied in the aesthetic attitude, and the impossibility of separating one factor of it from another. And it is the same question as that stated in other words, how a feeling can be got into an object. This is the central problem of the aesthetic attitude; and, as we have seen, the best material for solving it for us who are not great artists comes from any minor experience we may have at command in which we have been aware of the outgoing of feeling into expression. We must think not merely of the picture in the gallery or the statue in the museum, but of the song and the dance, the dramatic reading, the entering into music, or the feel of the material in the minor arts, or simply, of the creative discovery of the right word.

The festal or social view of art will

help us here. Suppose a tribe or a nation has won a great victory; "they are feeling big, and they want to make something big," as I have heard an expert say. That, I take it, is the rough account of the beginning of the aesthetic attitude. And according to their capacity and their stage of culture they may make a pile of their enemies' skulls, or they may build the Parthenon. The point of the aesthetic attitude lies in the adequate fusion of body and soul, where the soul is a feeling, and the body its expression, without residue on either side.

### III

#### FORMS OF AESTHETIC SATISFACTION— BEAUTY AND UGLINESS

It seems to me that a few words of preface to this lecture may be opportune, both to explain our attitude to the question of competence, in a region which *prima facie* demands something of special insight, and also to prepare ourselves for the general line which we shall adopt ; and it is this general line alone for which I can venture to claim attention and sympathy. It is nothing very new, unless in a certain thorough consistency ; but I think it is important, and follows from and sums up our preceding argument, and solves many difficulties.

I will therefore say a word of preface about the education in beauty of the

ordinary person who has grown up through the late nineteenth century to the present time, and its relation to certain quite recent movements. And I think it applies in some degree to the ordinary person at all times. The moderation of my claim is at one I hope with its logic. I am not saying that the record of such a person's experience in the beautiful justifies him for a moment in becoming dogmatic about problems of beauty. What has rather forced itself on me is that the ordinary person's laborious experience and self-education, if broad and sincere, brings him to much the same positions which highly gifted individuals adopt spontaneously from the beginning.

I suggest, then, that the training in beauty which comes to the ordinary mind, like that which a man may have picked up for himself during the last half century, is apt to begin in a golden fairyland. There is a verse in the *Poets of Our Day*, which expresses the sort of transition which I have in mind; its beginning in

the first three lines, and its close in the fourth :

Apes and ivory, skulls and roses, in junks of old  
Hong Kong,  
Gliding over a sea of dreams to a haunted shore of  
song ;  
Masts of gold and sails of satin, shimmering out of  
the east,  
Oh, Love has little need of you now to make his heart  
a feast.

Beauty, fancy, the poetical imagination, seemed, I take it, to one as a boy to be something remote, and the general feeling sustained the belief. A very striking example was the approving misconception, almost universal, I think, in the last century, of Wordsworth's great lines :

The light that never was on sea or land ;  
The consecration and the poet's dream.

The whole moral of this poem is indeed very much to my point.

In the middle nineteenth century we had with us the relics of romance—for example, the sentimental German ballads, really a weak imitation of our own genuine ballads

—Goethe's and Heine's songs stand outside this class; we had Southey's queer oriental fantasies; I remember at Harrow having to make a copy of verses on the "Curse of Kehama," which shows that we were expected to be familiar with the story. We had Walter Scott's "Spirit of the Flood and the Fell," the romantic setting of *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, and the more fantastic part of Shelley, and the religious fancies and fairy scenes of Sir Noel Paton, and even *Paradise Lost* came to be like this, when construed as a child's Sunday reading.

And when you were brought to Shakespeare you approached him perhaps through the purple patches, the cloud-capt towers, or Cleopatra on her barge; and if you looked at the Royal Academy you went through a phantasmagoria of remote incidents and pathetic scenes, and you wanted to be told what they were about.

Of course the real thing was well in reach all this time; there was *The Golden Treasury*, with access to the Elizabethan

lyrics, and there was Keats and *The Ancient Mariner*; and Walter Scott's novels, and the great artists of older days. But these latter, without some sort of guidance, might seem capricious and fantastic. I think the impression was that beauty was something exotic, and that poetic imagination meant fancying very quaint and fine out-of-the-way things. One enjoyed things nearer home and more genuine; but perhaps one did not know that they were to be called beauty, or that they demanded imagination.

A great revelation came probably to many individuals with three influences: Ruskin, with his Turner interpretation and with the theory of beauty as the expression of the workman's life; the *rapprochement* of Greek and modern drama through the profounder interpretation of Euripides, beginning from Browning and going on to Professor G. Murray; and oddly enough, the Pre-Raphaelite movement in English painting, which brought, like Walter Scott and William Morris, the end of the romantic

impulse into connection with what I should call the rising impulse of plain humanistic and humoristic vision. No doubt the Pre-Raphaelites had all sorts of romantic properties, but it was certainly from Burne-Jones that some of us learned what an old brick wall really looked like—and, of course, at bottom, romanticism and naturalism are one in Symbolism.<sup>1</sup> So we felt, when we got really to grips with Shakespeare, and saw one and the same tremendous poetic imagination creating Titania and penetrating Bottom the weaver, and ranging Falstaff over against Hamlet.

Later developments in pictorial art have been very remarkable; one regrets to see that William Morris took up his parable against Impressionism in the Arts and Crafts Essays; but the word may mean so many things that one must not insist too much on this. Taken in the sense of Stevenson's *Velasquez* it seems a revelation. And following the education

<sup>1</sup> By Symbolism I mean no esoteric doctrine, but the recognition of spiritual unity throughout appearances.



of our ordinary person, we find, I should say, that the recent movements in pictorial art have at least included phases which have enabled him to see the world with a larger and more penetrating imagination. Whatever endows him with a new gift of sight, he must suppose, I think, to be a gain. And the *rapprochement* between Greek and modern art and drama has immensely advanced of late, through the whole movement towards simplification of stage accompaniments and of dramatic structure. We are enabled to see and feel Greek art as straightforwardly human, sharing in the direct and passionate expression which we also find at our own doors. It is a great lesson to have learned that all good art is one. The recent revelations from China and Japan have, of course, borne strongly in this direction.

Thus I suggest that the ordinary man's education in the beautiful, since, say, the 'sixties, has been on the whole a home-coming from fairyland to simple vision and humanity. And of course he will keep his

fairyland, and that much more appreciatively, when his imagination is trained to bring it into his home. We may think of Mr. Rackham's designs for the *Midsummer Night's Dream*. In all this he has only learned what to those with the gift of imaginative vision has throughout been clear. It is the coincidence of the two frames of mind, so differently acquired, one by laborious discipline, the other by natural insight, which seems to be both interesting and convincing.

Now this preface bears on the problem of the narrower and larger meaning of beauty, and further on the very difficult problem of beauty and ugliness.

There must be, so long as ordinary persons continue to exist, a narrower and a wider meaning of beauty, and it has a certain justification in the kinds of beauty.

i. There must be a general word for what we consider aesthetically excellent. If there is to be any reason in things at all, this, the aesthetically excellent, must have a common property and common rationale,

and the only word we can find for this property is the word "beautiful." And, as we shall see, the degrees of its usage, its variations, make it impossible finally to draw a line between what is beautiful and what is not anywhere within this wide range of the aesthetically excellent. I mean, then, that this wide use of the word, "beautiful," is *in the end* the right use.

ii. But again, while ordinary people survive, we shall want a word for what is *prima facie* aesthetically pleasant; or pleasant to the ordinary sensibility; and for this we shall never get the common use of language to abandon the word "beautiful." We shall always find opposition if we say even that the sublime is a form of the beautiful, and when we come to the stern and terrible and grotesque and humorous, if we call them beautiful we shall, as a rule, be in conflict with usage. And I take it there is a real *specific* difference between *a* beautiful and the sublime, for instance.

So then, we may say that beauty in the

wider sense, which is also the more correct sense, and the sense come to by education, and that preferred I think by persons endowed with much aesthetic insight—beauty in this wider sense is the same as what is aesthetically excellent. But by a justified usage, this wider sense of beauty which equals aesthetically excellent must be taken as containing two classes, that of easy beauty and that of difficult beauty, including the sublime, etc., respectively.

1. It is dangerous perhaps to give examples, which may offend some one's convictions, but the character of easy or facile beauty is, I think, readily recognisable. It coincides with that which, on grounds which cannot be pronounced unaesthetic, is *prima facie* pleasant to practically every one. A simple tune; a simple spatial rhythm, like that of the tiles in one's fireplace; a rose; a youthful face, or the human form in its prime, all these afford a plain straightforward pleasure to the ordinary "body-and-mind." There is no use in lengthening the list.

Now here there is an interesting and important observation to be met. Surely, it may be urged against our distinction, the very greatest achievements of all in art, and the very most beautiful and splendid things in nature, appeal to everybody, ordinary people and others, so that we must not set down the universality of appeal in beautiful things as a character which implies a trivial or superficial character in them. That is to say, it seems as if some easy beauty were yet beauty of the highest type.

In answer to this, I incline to think we ought to distinguish between the easier types of beauty and what might be called simple victorious or triumphant beauty; between the Venus dei Medici and the Venus of Milo; between the opening of *Marmion* and the first chorus of the *Agamemnon*. I take it that very great works of art often possess simple aspects which have a very wide appeal, partly for good reasons, partly also for less good ones. We shall see a good reason below.

Thus, I do not think that the existence of triumphant beauty disproves the fact that there is a class of easy beauty.

\* I believe, therefore, that we cannot dispense with the distinction between the easier and the more difficult beauty. I will pass at once to the latter in order to explain more precisely by contrast what I have in mind.

2. The difficulty, amounting for some persons to repulsion, which belongs to such beauty as makes the rarer appeal, may take different forms. I suggest three. I do not say that they cover all the cases. I will call them : ( $\alpha$ ) Intricacy ; ( $\beta$ ) Tension ; ( $\gamma$ ) Width.

( $\alpha$ ) The case of intricacy is very instructive, because in it you can often show to demonstration that the more difficult aesthetic object has all that the simpler has, and more. You could show this in many conventional patterns, *e.g.* in the case of the common volutes which are so often found separate, and which are also combined with the palmetto pattern in

the design from the ceiling of the treasury at Orchomenus. And I presume that you can show the same thing very completely in music, where the failure of appreciation is often simply the inability to follow a construction which possesses intricacy beyond a certain degree. And, no doubt, there is apt to be a positive revulsion against a difficulty which we cannot solve. It is very noticeable in aesthetic education how the appreciation of what is too intricate for us begins with isolated bits, which introduce us to the pervading beautiful quality of the texture we are trying to apprehend—a lovely face in an old Italian picture, before we are ready to grasp its “music of spaces”; a magnificent couplet in *Sordello*, which has been said to contain the finest isolated distichs in the English language; or a simple melody in a great symphony. When it is demonstrated to one that the texture at every point is exquisitely beautiful, as is always the case in the works which furnish the higher and rarer test of appreciation—we may think

of Dante's *Inferno*—it is easier to believe that one's failure to grasp the whole is simply a defect in one's capacity of attention. And the progress of one's education confirms this suggestion. The difficult beauty simply gives you too much, at one moment, of what you are perfectly prepared to enjoy if only you could take it all in.

( $\beta$ ) The same thing is true with the high tension of feeling. Aristotle speaks, in a most suggestive phrase, of the "weakness of the spectators," which shrinks from the essence of tragedy. In other words, the capacity to endure and enjoy feeling at high tension is somewhat rare. The principle is the same as that of intricacy, but it is a different case. Such feeling may be embodied in structures, *e.g.* in words, which look very simple. But yet it demands profound effort and concentration to apprehend them.

An exception, within the area of this particular case, may afford an excellent example of what I called triumphant



beauty—beauty which, although of the most distinguished quality, is universal in its appeal. I mean when a passage of feeling at high tension, simply and directly expressed, has the mixture of luck and merit which makes it strike on some great nerve of humanity, and thus conquer the suffrages of the world. Great artists, from Plato to Balzac, have laid stress on this possibility, and Balzac at least was not the man needlessly to admit anything in derogation of the pure prerogative of art. I have never found the man or woman to whom the Demeter of Knidos failed to appeal, and it surely cannot be set down as facile beauty in the depreciatory sense.

But, in general, one may say that the common mind—and all our minds are common at times—resents any great effort or concentration, and for the same reason resents the simple and severe forms which are often the only fitting embodiment of such a concentration—forms which promise, as Pater says, a great expressiveness, but only on condition of being received

with a great attentiveness. The kind of effort required is not exactly an intellectual effort; it is something more, it is an imaginative effort, that is to say, as we saw, one in which the body-and-mind, without resting upon a fixed system like that of accepted conventional knowledge, has to frame for itself as a whole an experience in which it can "live" the embodiment before it. When King John says to Hubert the single word "death," the word is, in a sense, easily apprehended; but the state of the whole man behind the broken utterance may take some complete transformation of mental attitude to enter into. And such a transformation may not be at all easy or comfortable; it may be even terrible, so that in Aristotle's phrase the weakness of the spectator shrinks from it. And this is very apt to apply, on one ground or another, to all great art, or indeed to all that is great of any kind. There is no doubt a resentment against what is great, if we cannot rise to it. I am trying to elucidate the point that in all this

difficult beauty, which goes beyond what is comfortable for the indolent or timid mind, there is nothing but a "more" of the same beautiful, which we find *prima facie* pleasant, changed only by being intensified. But this is enough to prevent us from recognising it as beauty, except by self-education or a natural insight.

(γ) I suggested yet another dimension of the more difficult beauty, under the name of "width."

It is a remarkable and rather startling fact that there are genuine lovers of beauty, well equipped in scholarship, who cannot really enjoy Aristophanes, or Rabelais, or the Falstaff scenes of Shakespeare. This is again, I venture to think, a "weakness of the spectator." In strong humour or comedy you have to endure a sort of dissolution of the conventional world. All the serious accepted things are shown you topsy-turvy; beauty, in the narrow and current sense, among them. The comic spirit enjoys itself at the expense of everything; the gods are starved out and

brought to terms by the birds' command of the air, cutting off the vapour of sacrifice on which they lived; Titania falls in love with Bottom the weaver; Falstaff makes a fool of the Lord Chief Justice of England.

All this demands a peculiar strength to encompass with sympathy its whole width. You must feel a liberation in it all; it is partly like a holiday in the mountains or a voyage at sea; the customary scale of everything is changed, and you yourself perhaps are revealed to yourself as a trifling insect or a moral prig.

And it is to be noted, that you need strength to cover all this width without losing hold of the centre. If you wholly lost the normal view of all these things which you are to see upside down, the comedy would all be killed dead at once. It is the contrast that makes the humour. If religion is not a serious thing to you, there is no fun in joking about it.

In this region, that of humour, expression is I think inevitably very complex, as is the feeling it embodies. It is a sort

of counter-expression—the normal, all of it, plus a further point of view, caricatured, *chargé*, loaded or burdened with an abnormal emphasis.

Thus, here again, you have the more, as compared with the normal experience of the beautiful ; you have a wide range of forms, all of them distinguished by an attitude taken up towards the conventional attitude. And this demands both a complexity of expression and a complexity of mood, departing widely from the lines of the ordinary moods of serious life, and even of serious aesthetic experience. Comedy always shocks many people.

So much for difficult beauty. Now the object of thus insisting on these two grades of beauty was twofold.

First, to defend, as not merely convenient but right, the extension of the term beauty to all that is aesthetically excellent. For the insight of gifted persons regards it all as one ; and the recognition of the same nature in it throughout in consequence of sincere self-education is a

question of more and less in the way of attentiveness and imaginative effort. There is no constant line to be drawn between easy and difficult beauty. And I think we must all have noticed that the gift of aesthetic appreciativeness has more to do with sincerity of character than with intellectual capacity. In the appreciation of great things, so much depends on teachableness, and the absence of self-absorption and the yearning to criticise.

And, secondly, it was to prepare us to approach the fundamental problem of what we mean by real ugliness. For this account of the degrees and areas of beauty nibbles away to some extent the current antithesis of beauty and ugliness.

Intricacy, tension, and width account for a very large proportion of so-called ugliness, that is to say, of what shocks most people, or else seems to them repellently uninteresting, or overstrained, or fantastic. All this part of ugliness then seems due to the weakness of the spectator, whether his object is nature or art. Note

how slowly, *e.g.*, the beauty of old age, I mean of real wrinkled old age, not stately and splendid old age, gains recognition in sculpture; I think not before the Alexandrine period.

Before going further, it will be best to return upon one fundamental point and make it quite clear. We started in the first lecture by describing the aesthetic attitude as involving a pleasant feeling of such and such a kind. But we have now seen that the pleasant feeling which is one with the appreciation of beauty is not a previous condition of beauty. It is not on some other ground a pleasure, and then by being expressed becomes beautiful. It is a pleasantness not antecedent to the appreciation of beauty, but arising in and because of it, in the freedom or expansion which the mind enjoys in and through the act which gives or finds adequate embodiment for its feeling, and so makes the feeling what it is. Therefore, you must not say pleasantness is a condition precedent of beauty; rather, beauty

is a condition precedent of pleasantness. Beauty is essentially enjoyed; it lives in enjoyment of a certain kind. But you cannot make it up out of enjoyments of any other kind.

Now about true ugliness. This must mean, if it means anything, invincible ugliness, such as no sane imagination can see as beauty. It must be quite a different thing from difficult beauty.

About this question of true ugliness there is a general paradox, which applies also to the kindred questions of error and moral evil. I will state it first in general language, for the sake of its philosophical interest.

Beauty is feeling become plastic. Now a thing which conflicts with beauty, which produces an effect contrasted with its effect—what we call ugliness—must itself be either plastic (=expressive) or not.

If it is not plastic, *i.e.* has no expressive form by which it embodies anything, then, for aesthetic purposes, it is nothing. But if it *is* plastic, *i.e.* if it has expressive form,



and therefore embodies a feeling, then it itself falls within the general definition of the beautiful as = what is aesthetically excellent.

You might be tempted to rejoin—ah, but the ugly expresses only something unpleasant. But we have seen why this will not help us. If an object comes within the definition of beauty, then (supposing the definition is right) its being unpleasant to us would merely be due to our weakness and want of education, and it would come within the limits of difficult beauty.

So we go back to the paradox; if it has no expressive form, it is nothing for aesthetic. If it has one, it belongs to the beautiful. This is no quibble. It is a fundamental difficulty about beauty and truth and goodness; it comes when you try to set up an opposite to anything which depends on being complete. Try love and hate. Hate is to be the opposite of love; well, what do you hate and why? What is your hate directed upon? It

cannot be aimed at nothing. It must be directed upon something definite and hold together for some reason, and this reason must be the nature of something which outrages you in some way, violates your purposes and likings. So when you fill it all in and see it in full with what it aims at, your hate has turned to some sort of love ; it is a positive passion for something which something else obstructs. There is the same paradox with error.

Thus, you can hardly say that what is ugly is fully expressive of *anything*. For if it were so, it would become *ipso facto* a kind of beauty. And, if you maintain this, you withdraw wholly within the doctrine of the "weakness of the spectator," and you say in effect that there is no such thing as invincible ugliness. I am much inclined to such a view ; but there is more to be considered.

For, take the case of mere apparent ugliness itself, such as is due to our weakness of attention or imagination. It seems to be a positive aesthetic effect, and one

which must be accounted for as much as if it were fundamental and invincible. When we judge an appearance as ugly, even if ultimately we are wrong, what is it that we mean to indicate ?

One might say, an appearance is ugly which has indeed, as everything must have, a form and a self-expression in a sense, but a form such as to convey an impression of formlessness. The German "Unform" is suggestive at this point. Primarily meaning "formlessness," it may also convey the implication of ugliness. We can show the same usage, in saying, for example, "That is a hideous hat, it is perfectly formless." But, *prima facie*, this can only mean that a thing has not the kind of form we expect. Or even if there could be an expression of unexpressiveness, you would, in one sense, have in it the very highest achievements of the sublime and the humorous. For the sublime, take the famous passage in Job, or Milton's description of death. These present to your imagination something whose aesthetic embodiment is that it is

too awful to be actually apprehended in a shape. Or, in the region of humour; it is only too easy to tell a story without a point; but it is a very clever and difficult thing to tell a story whose point is that it has no point. Ugliness cannot be merely the expression of what will not go into definite form. Even in the revulsion against difficult beauty, it has a positive quality of discordancy, though perhaps one which we ought to be able to overcome.

We must try again. One might think of a combination of beautiful expressions which should contradict each other so that the whole should be ugly, *i.e.* incapable as a whole of embodying any single feeling; though the parts were beautiful. This would be in one sense inexpressive, *i.e.* a conflict or discord of expressions. And this error might be multiplied; there might be an aggregate of beautiful parts which refused to come together as a single embodiment at all. I should suppose that these cases do occur, and one cannot say

they are mere absences of beauty. No doubt they would have a positively shocking effect. But we see what they would be. They would be, not something new and alien and brought from somewhere else than beauty. They would consist in a beauty in the wrong place, parallel to conceiving moral badness as a goodness in the wrong place. You can easily fancy a case by misuse of the human form, substituting limbs of the lower animals for its limbs, as in fauns or mediaeval devils. Suppose the beautiful silky ear of a dachshund replacing the ear of a beautiful human face. It would be, I imagine, a horribly hideous thing. Here we have, in principle, I think a genuine case of ugliness. But we see how limited its antagonism to beauty is. Then you get again the problem whether in the whole context of what is imagined this discord may not itself be made expressive, and so subordinated to beauty, as in some fairy tale of enchantment. If so, note that it becomes really a part of the whole beauty. It is a half-

hearted theory to call it ugly, and treat it as a foil to beauty, like dark to light.

We have then not yet really run down our true or invincible ugliness; though we have approached it so far as we have found something akin to it in a form of "inexpressiveness."

For Croce the ugly is the purely inexpressive. But that we saw is not strictly possible.

The inexpressive, except by self-contradiction, would be nothing. For how can any appearance be inexpressive? Its defect could only be due to our want of insight and sympathy. Put it in another way: if the ugly is the unaesthetic, well then it is not aesthetic at all, and we are not concerned with it. So we seem driven to this. If there is a truly ugly which is aesthetically judged, and which is not merely a failure of our imagination, it must be an appearance which is both expressive and inexpressive at once, aesthetically judged, yet unaesthetic. "The same thing must be looked for that

is looked for in the beautiful, and its opposite found " (Solger). That is to say, the appearance must suggest an adequate embodiment of a feeling, and also frustrate it. The imagination must be at once excited in a particular direction and thwarted in it. The pain of a discord in music, it has been said, is like trying to do a sum in your head, and finding the numbers too high. A flickering light is another simple example ; if the period of flickering is just enough to begin to satisfy the eye, and then to check its activity, it is exceedingly painful.

Then, going back on our account of the embodiment of feeling and the experience of the rising mountain, we see that any sudden check or break in a pattern, *e.g.* an obvious want of symmetry, if it is not explained to the imagination, must have this effect of arousing the mind in a certain direction, and then obstructing it in that same direction. This double effect may be brought under the general head of the inexpressive. But of course it is not the

merely inexpressive—that, as we have said throughout, would be at least aesthetically nothing at all. It is a form of expression whose intention can be detected, very often a recollection of some other successful and excellent expression, but which in the execution violates its own intention. Thus you have in it the two factors we held necessary ; the suggestion of expressiveness and its counteraction by a completion conflicting with it. It must be a story without a point ; not the caricature of a pointless story, because in that the defect is made an excellence ; but yet a story.

The difference between this and the case of conflicting beautiful expressions, which we spoke of before, is not very wide in principle, because we cannot give up the observation that every form expresses something. The difference is that in this case the suggestion of beauty is baffled by an expression which consists of the interruption and positive undoing or negation of that in which significance for the suggestion consisted. A simple asymmetry,



quite unprovoked, is, as we said, a typical case.

Thus we approach the general result that the principal region in which to look for insuperable ugliness is that of conscious attempts at beautiful expression—in a word, the region of insincere and affected art. Here you necessarily have the very root of ugliness—the pretension to pure expression, which alone can have a clear and positive failure. It is possible, I take it, for the appearances of nature to have the same effect, and therefore to be genuinely ugly. But there is a wide difference of principle between the two provinces, because to nature we can never impute the conscious effort at beautiful expression; and therefore the particular context in which we seem to see such an effort negatived must always be one of our own choosing. The ugly effect must therefore be in some degree imputable to our own mis-selection rather than to the being of nature herself; although, of course, one may argue that just because she has no

conscious choice, she must accept discredit for her ugly appearances, as well as credit for her beautiful ones. But one might perhaps rejoin again, "Yes, but in her infinite wealth of contexts and appearances, there is always ample opportunity for the selection of beautiful form, and therefore we have no right to pin her down to an ugliness which does really spring from our limitation." You may reply again that if it is left to us there is just as much room for seeing ugliness as for seeing beauty. But I doubt this. If the intentional attempt at beauty is the main condition of ugliness, then in nature the main condition of ugliness is certainly absent, while immeasurable stores of form and order are as certainly present for those who can elicit them.

And the same applies in great measure to the world of useful objects,\*so long as they pretend to be nothing more than they are. So long they cannot be fraudulent; and their solid simplicity of purpose may well make it possible to see a beauty in

them, due, so to speak, to their single-heartedness, which may make their form a single harmonious expression. On the other hand, any attempt to confer upon them mere decorative beauty inconsistent with their purpose would at once make them positively ugly.

This gives us the clue to a reasonable estimate of the current idea that ugliness is all of man's making and not of nature's. It seems in principle to rest upon the fact we have noted, that man alone has in him the capacity for the attempt to achieve pure expression for its own sake, in other words, beauty, and therefore he is much more likely to produce the appearance of the combined attempt and failure which we have seen to be the essence of the ugly.

One further ambiguity in a common phrase seems worth clearing up. Is beauty the aim of art? Is "art for art's sake" a watchword that conveys a truth?

I hope that the line we have taken shows its value by making it easy to deal with these ideas. Beauty, we have seen,

is an ambiguous term. If it means some given ideal which lays restrictions beforehand upon individual expressiveness, something of the nature of the easy beauty, which rules out what is beyond our capacity to grasp at a given moment, then it is very dangerous to say that beauty is the aim of art. It is dangerous, that is, if it means to us that we know beforehand what sort or type of thing our beauty is to be. For beauty is above all a creation, a new individual expression in which a new feeling comes to exist. And if we understand it so, there is not much meaning in saying that it is the aim of art, for we do not know beforehand what that is to be. If we understand it otherwise, as a rule previously prescribed, then it is something which must be hostile to free and complete expression for expression's sake. In that case the aim of art is not the full aim, but only the art in the aim, and that is a fatal separation.

Of "art for art's sake" the same criticism, I think, holds true. It tells you

nothing if it only tells you that the aim of art is to do what art truly aims to do. But if it means that art is some limiting conception, some general standard accepted beforehand, then I suggest that it becomes actively mischievous. The aim of art can then no longer be the full self-developing aim which is the aim of art, because art as an abstract conception has been thrown into the idea of the aim, carrying with it a fatal and restricting self-consciousness. In applying a method or principle rightly, you do not think of the method or principle. You think of the work, and live the method or principle. Art, like knowledge, is creative and individual, and you cannot lay down beforehand where either of them will take you. And if you make the attempt, you must be unfaithful to their freedom.

I have not attempted in these lectures to give a systematic account either of the forms of beauty, for example the tragic and the sublime, or of the historical development of art. What I desired was

to concentrate upon a single leading conception, the conception of the way in which an object of imagination can be expressive of feeling, and the consequences of this way of expression for the feeling so expressed. And what I should like to have effected, from a negative point of view, so far as it is still necessary in these days, would be to have torn away the gilded veil, the glamour, so to speak, which hangs over the face of beauty and separates it from life. We are not advocating what is miscalled realism ; our account of imaginative vision makes that a mere absurdity. But I am trying to prove, and not merely to prove but to help ourselves to realise, how the whole world of beauty, from the Greek key pattern on the one hand and our admiration of the curve of a waterfall on the other, up to the intricacies of the greatest architecture or the tension of Shakespearean tragedy, is the individual operation of a single impulse, the same in spectator and creative artist, and best discerned when we penetrate the heart of

strength and greatness under the veil of commonplace destiny or tragic collision, where there is no golden haze to flatter our indolence and luxury. And now as always one's words seem a tale of little meaning, which goes on missing the heart of its own intention. Let me end with a quotation from an early tractate of Goethe, which contains in a few brief strokes all that I have been saying, and the germ, I think, of all that the last hundred years of aesthetic have taught us. Only I must give the warning that he employs the term beautiful sometimes in the sense which he and I alike are working against, the sense of easy beauty.

The passage, however, explains itself :

“ When I first went to see the cathedral, my head was full of general conceptions of good taste. I revered, from hearsay, harmony of masses and purity of form, and was a sworn foe to the confused caprices of Gothic decoration. Under the rubric ‘ Gothic,’ like an article in a dictionary, I had collected all the mistaken

synonyms that had ever come into my head, 'disorderly, unnatural, a heap of odds and ends, patchwork, overloaded.' . . . How unexpected was the feeling with which the sight amazed me, when I stood before the building. My soul was filled by a great and complete impression, which, because it was composed of a thousand harmonious details, I was able to taste and to enjoy, but in no way to understand and explain. How constantly I returned to enjoy this half-heavenly pleasure, to comprehend in their work the giant-spirit of our elder brothers! . . . How often has the evening twilight interrupted with friendly rest the eye fatigued by its exploring gaze, when the complex parts melted into complete masses, which, simple and great, stood before my soul, and my powers arose gladly at once to enjoy and to understand. . . . How freshly it greeted me in the morning brilliance, how gladly I observed the great harmonious masses, vitalised in their numberless minute parts, as in the work of eternal nature, all of it



form, and all bearing upon the whole ! how lightly the enormous firm-based building rises into the air, how broken it is, and yet how eternal ! And so do I not well to be angry when the German art-scholar mistakes his own advantage, and disparages this work with the unintelligible term ' Gothic ' ! . . .

" But you, dear youth, shall be my companion, you who stand there in emotion, unable to reconcile the contradictions which conflict in your soul ; who now feel the irresistible power of the great totality, and now chide me for a dreamer, that I see beauty, where you see only strength and roughness.

" Do not let a misconception come between us ; do not let the effeminate doctrine of the modern beauty-monger make you too tender to enjoy significant roughness, lest in the end your enfeebled feeling should be able to endure nothing but unmeaning smoothness. They try to make you believe that the fine arts arose from our supposed inclination to beautify

the world around us. That is not true. . . .

“Art is formative long before it is beautiful, and yet is then true and great art, very often truer and greater than beautiful art itself. For man has in him a formative nature, which displays itself in activity as soon as his existence is secure ; so soon as he is free from care and from fear, the demigod, active in repose, gropes round him for matter into which to breathe his spirit. And so the savage remodels with bizarre traits, horrible forms, and coarse colours, his ‘cocos,’ his feathers, and his own body. And though this imagery consists of the most capricious forms, yet without proportions of shape, its parts will agree together, for a single feeling has created them into a characteristic whole.

“Now this characteristic art is the only true art. When it acts on what lies round it from inward, single, individual, independent feeling, careless and even ignorant of all that is alien to it, then, whether born of rude savagery or of cultivated sensibility,

it is whole and living. Of this you see numberless degrees among nations and individuals.

"The more that this beauty penetrates the being of a mind, seeming to be of one origin with it, so that the mind can tolerate nothing else, and produce nothing else, so much the happier is the artist."<sup>1</sup>

That, ladies and gentlemen, is pretty much what I have been trying to say to you.

---

<sup>1</sup> From Goethe's *Von deutscher Baukunst*, written when he was twenty-four. *Werke*, ed. Stuttgart, 1858, Bd. 25, S. 1. The subject is Strasburg Cathedral.

In the discussion on p. 85 ff. the reader might be puzzled as to the relation of the two phases of beauty, "easy" and "difficult," together with the three suggested cases of "difficulty" in beauty, to the various species of the beautiful, such as beauty proper, sublimity, and others, which are mentioned here and there in the text, but are not methodically discussed.

I should explain that I held a methodical account of the species of beauty too much to undertake in the limits of these lectures, and therefore confined myself to explaining how there can at all be a genuine beauty which yet falls beyond that to which the name is currently given. The distinctions of pp. 85 and 87 are akin to the specific distinctions but do not coincide with them.

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THE END

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